



For Better Tourist Income

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY



How well do you know your community? Winona

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WHY KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY?

Are you interested in improving living enjoyment for citizens of your community and at the same time increasing opportunities for incomes and jobs? That is the potential from a program that teaches residents about the community and makes this information more readily available to visitors.

All persons should have pride in their community and know how to enjoy it. Visitors (tourists) need to learn about the community quickly and easily. This publication shows how knowledge about the community by businessmen, sales personnel, and citizens can improve the community's tourist industry.

DOESN'T EVERYONE KNOW HIS OR HER COMMUNITY?

It may come as a surprise that many citizens do not "know their community." Certainly most know how to get there on the roads and recognize the downtown area. But many fail to appreciate what is special about their community—even though every community has unique features. Further, many who regularly provide services to travelers never think of their community in terms of its supplying needs and experiences for those away from home.

Do you doubt this?

Then try an experiment—one that the authors have tried many times throughout Minnesota. Ask a waitress, retail clerk or gas pump operator (one who doesn't know you) what there is to do. A common reaction is a shrug and comment "nothing," often followed by a suggestion involving another community!

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY?

"Familiarity breeds contempt" and to a person born and growing up in a community everything about it is commonplace. But is it? Definitely not!

Every community, every institution (school, church or association), even every homestead has its own romance of human sweat, toil, tears, joy, laughter, and achievement. In some cases the story dips to the level of disaster and tragedy; in others it soars to triumph. Seemingly small items such as the names of local places often have a fascinating story. Knowing this history adds depth to the citizen's appreciation of his heritage. Sharing it with travelers brings them into touch with the infinite variety of nature and humanity and elevates their contact with the community from a "stop" to a shared living experience.

Residents of a predominantly agricultural area may question their having much of interest to show to visitors. But only about five percent of the population is now engaged in commercial agriculture—a proportion that grows smaller with each year. In the food shortages that caught up with the world in 1973 and 1974 we rediscovered the fact that "food comes from someone's farm!" The story of Minnesota's agriculture deserves telling. It can be told with pride. Not only does it have a romantic past but its present on-going story is equally fascinating.

What goes for agricultural areas can be said with equal emphasis for communities whose support comes from forests and mines. Even fewer people know about these industries than are familiar with agriculture. In addition, most processing and manufacturing plants are areas of interest to visitors.

Travelers increasingly are interested in knowing about the human history, human interest, natural history, and the production activities of their host community. Residents' pride in their home town can grow from knowledge of the community heritage; in sharing it with travelers they have the opportunity of improving income from tourism and adding to the life experience of the traveler.



WHY DEVELOP TOURISM?

Not everyone loves a tourist. The opposite is, in fact, often the case. We snicker at those who are unfamiliar with local services; we often resent having to compete with visitors for roads, parking, or our favorite lake.

So why develop tourism?

Four interrelated reasons establish tourism's place as an integral part of every community.

- Like every other industry tourism generates jobs, profits, and tax base. It may add importantly to the economic base of the community.
- Tourism is essential to most modern industry; there must be travel by suppliers and by technical help for sales purposes. Good hospitality services (those businesses such as food, lodging, travel, and entertainment) can contribute to the viability of all other industries in the community.
- Travel/tourism is an essential part of the American life style. We travel for recreation, for education, and for social purposes as well as for business. With the right



▲ Top—Every community has tourism; most could substantially improve their tourism income. Walnut Grove

Not every community can offer cruises, but each has history, vistas, and activities unique to it alone. Duluth

◀ By knowing the community, residents can take full advantage of its facilities for living quality.

to travel goes a reciprocal responsibility to host others who are travelers. If we resent visitors in the community, we can expect hostility when we, ourselves, are traveling.

- Travelers often help pay for facilities of a quality that local citizens could not otherwise afford. These may include sports facilities, theatre, and eating services. As examples: The well-maintained golf course on the edge of town may receive extensive support from visitors; many fine local restaurants depend upon trade from travelers as well as residents for economic health.

What about the disadvantages? Tourism problems are often loudly voiced. But every industry has a cost—in terms of pollution, land use conflicts, need to furnish utilities and transportation, financing costs, and many others. Further, each industry, whether agricultural, manufacturing or another type, has uncertainties and hazards; these hazards are in terms of price stability, demand fluctuations, and, in the case of many factories, the whims of absentee owners. Many citizens fail to recognize these problems that are inherent in an already-existing local industry.

A "tourist" is defined here as any person who is away from his usual place of residence and work. A distance of at least 100 miles or more from home is usually added to this definition — the U.S. Travel Data Center and the U.S. Bureau of Census both use this definition. The terms "visitor" and "tourist" are used interchangeably. For further discussion of tourism see companion publication Extension Folder 379, *So Your Community Wants Tourism?*, available from your county extension office.

SO YOUR COMMUNITY WANTS TOURISM?

Every community has some tourism. But, like any other industry, positive tourism growth is not automatic; it must be fostered by systematic effort. A "know your community" program can be one important step in this direction.

GOOD HOSTING MEANS KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY

Most communities could well enhance the opportunity to increase tourism by doing some homework, such as self-evaluation and analysis of their "hosting qualities." If a visitor to a community is treated with courtesy and friendliness and enjoys his stay, he will look forward to another visit to this community and will recommend it to his acquaintances. Thus, the art of practicing good hospitality is an important ingredient for every community that wishes to increase tourism.

Who are the hosts in any given community? Traditionally we think they are the innkeeper, perhaps the restaurant manager, or the resort owner from the nearby lake; however, if you would take time to observe the activity pattern of tourists in your community, you would see that they do not spend all their time in their hotel room or resort cottage and they do not linger in a restaurant. They are out doing things. They are making purchases in local retail outlets, such as grocery stores, drug stores, hardware stores, gift shops, service stations, etc. If they are attending a business meeting or a convention in your city, they do not spend all their time in conference rooms. During their break periods and evening hours and during the time prior to and after convention sessions, they are often making purchases in local retail outlets. If visitors are in your community for the purpose of visiting friends and relatives, all of their time is not spent in the home of their friend or relative; they are moving about the community sightseeing, eating out, and making gift selections or other necessary purchases.

As these tourists move about your community, it becomes obvious that it is not only the innkeeper and the restaurant manager who are their hosts. The list of community hosts expands to include service station attendants, store clerks, churches, schools, and citizens. Many visitors' impressions of a community are formed strictly from their contacts with just such people in a community. Most tourists who visit a community are



Tyler's neese mon show off the city's Danish heritage.

A "Know Your Community" Program (in a nutshell)

1. Secure on-going interest and leadership by a responsible local body (such as local government, chamber of commerce, or service club)
2. Learn about tourism in your community (as an example of helpful literature: see Extension Folder 378—*So Your Community Wants Tourism?* available through your county extension office)
3. Do a systematic inventory of your community's services, attractions, and special features
4. Enlist interest and aid of citizens and agencies having special interests (see section "Who Can Help")
5. Conduct an education/training program for retail business managers, their employees, and all citizens. (See section "Spreading the Word")
6. Conduct hospitality seminars regularly
7. Build an on-going program:
 - Develop literature for distribution
 - Develop a complete system of directional/interpretative signs
 - Repeat educational workshops for new personnel and to bring senior personnel up-to-date

unfamiliar and often are seeking a variety of information about the area. They want to know about road directions, road conditions, and mileages to certain points. They often are seeking information about eating and lodging facilities. They may be looking for a specific place of business or recreational facility. They may be interested in history of the local area. The list could go on and on as to the variety of information that visitors might be seeking when they are in a community.

And where do visitors who are strangers to a community usually go to seek this kind of information? Some of them may find the local chamber of commerce office, but most of them are asking for directions and other kinds of information from the service station attendant, the store clerk, the waitress in the local restaurant, or the person on the street. Many visitors contact only one or two local people; these individuals shape the traveler's image—positively or negatively—of the community. Unfortunately, many business managers, and the employees themselves, forget this fact and have never given much thought to the art of practicing hospitality.

THE FIRST STEP—AN INVENTORY

One of the first things that needs to be done in accomplishing the task of better hostmanship in any community is the task of completing an inventory of the community's resources. This inventory should be as comprehensive as possible. Put yourself in the visitors' shoes. What might they want to know about your community? What are some of the questions they might be asking around town?

In many communities much of the needed information has already been assembled. Thus the first step is to contact organizations, such as those listed in the section on pages 6 and 7, that may have this. Your job is then to organize it and make it available.

You might want to use the following list to serve as a guide as you inventory your community's resources:

1. Commercial food and lodging facilities—All tourists have to sleep and eat. It is to your community's advantage if they decide to satisfy one or both of these basic human needs in your town. List all the restaurants, including fast food services, that are located in your area. Next, inventory the local motels, hotels, resorts, and campgrounds in your area. Find out what kinds of accommodations they provide. Do they have housekeeping cabins, motel units, campgrounds, and eating facilities?

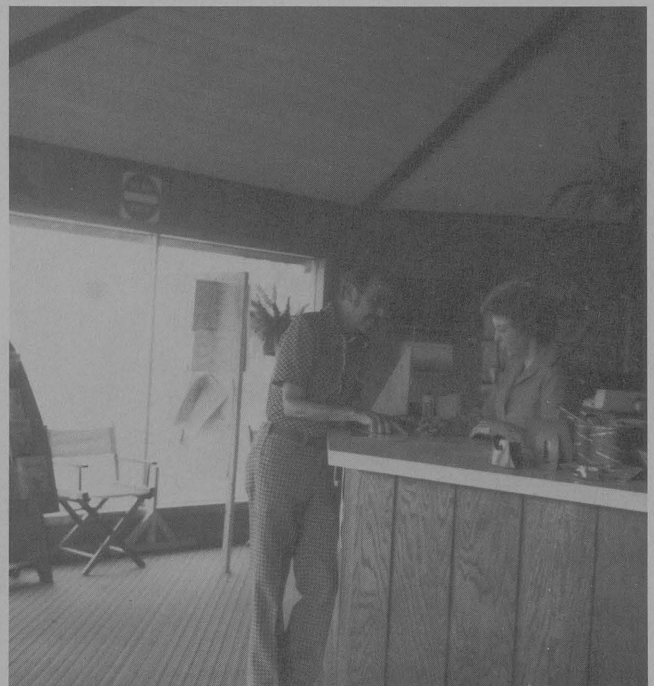
2. Transportation services—Where can an automobile be repaired? What are the bus connections? Where is the airport?

3. Municipal and county parks, golf courses, playgrounds—Does your city have a park? What kind of facilities does the park offer? Picnicking? Camping? Athletic fields? Public swimming beach or pool? Arboretum or greenhouse? Does your county have a county park system? Do you know where the recreational facilities are located and the services provided at each one?

4. State and federal recreational facilities—Minnesota is blessed with an abundance of state and federal recreational areas. They can be found in virtually every county in the state.

A. State parks—There are 64 state parks in Minnesota, and they are widely dispersed throughout the state. Get acquainted with those that are close to your community. How do you get to them? How many miles away? What kinds of recreational facilities do they provide?

Good hosting means "selling the community" to visitors so that they "experience" it. Park Rapids



B. State forests—There are 54 designated state forests in the state. Although state forests are not managed primarily for recreational purposes, many of them contain a variety of trails, lake-access sites, plus primitive camping and picnic grounds.

C. National forests—Two national forests, the Superior and the Chippewa, are located in Minnesota. The Superior contains the unique water-based Boundary Waters Canoe Area. If your community is located in the north central or northeastern part of the state, then you are within close proximity to the many fine recreational facilities located throughout these two forests. Be sure to include their nearby campgrounds, picnic grounds, nature trails, etc., in your inventory.

D. Corps of Engineers facilities—The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains some outstanding camp and picnic grounds on several Minnesota lakes and rivers. Is there one near your community?

E. National monuments and parks—Minnesota has two national monuments—Pipestone, in the southwestern part of the state, and Grand Portage, in the extreme northeastern tip. Both are fascinating interpretations of early Minnesota history. Voyageurs National Park on the Minnesota-Canadian border is still in the development stage but eventually will be attracting thousands of visitors each year to our state.

F. State and national wildlife areas—These occur in most parts of the state. They offer nature interpretation and observation. They may also have trails, hunting, and fishing.

5. Historical sites and museums—Every community in Minnesota has an interesting historical background. Most counties, through their county historical societies, have established historical sites and museums, and 353 Minnesota sites are on the National Historic Register. In addition, the Minnesota historical society has developed a number of outstanding historical interpretation sites throughout the state. The American public is fascinated by history. Tourists will be more likely to stop and stay longer in a community that provides interpretation of its historical background and heritage. In addition, widespread knowledge of the community's heritage is one effective means of building pride on the part of residents.

6. Water and other recreating places—Minnesota is blessed with an abundance of water and forest resources. The 12,000 lakes, 25,000 miles of streams and 19 million acres of forest land are among the principal tourism near a body of water, a stream, or a river. The task of inventorying nearby water resources of some Minnesota communities could get rather formidable because of the large number of lakes and streams. Things that should be listed in this inventory include lake and stream names, access sites, resort names and locations, fishing and hunting possibilities, boat and canoe rentals, and marinas. Fortunately, many Minnesota communities have inventories of lakes and streams which include recreational facilities on them.

7. Special community events—Most Minnesota communities conduct one or two special events each year. They range from such diverse activities as ice

Well-designed signs help inform the visitor where to go, what to do, and what to see. Duluth

Gathering information about your community does little good unless it is made available to travelers who need it. Be sure information stations have your literature. Thompson Hill Highway Information Center



fishing contests and sled dog racing to water carnivals and harvest festivals. These kinds of community events attract people and, with the right kind of promotion and publicity, can draw large numbers of visitors to your community. These visitors can help defray the cost of such events for the enjoyment of all.

8. Local industry—Most visitors to a community are curious as to how local people make a living. If there is a major industry in your community does it offer guided tours for the public? What are the time schedules for these tours? In cases where tours are not practicable, interpretative signs can help the visitor to understand the community and its economy.

9. Churches—Any community directory should include a list of all local churches. They should be listed by name, denomination, and street location. The times of services should also be listed.

10. Schools, colleges, and medical facilities—In addition to the daily activities of students and teachers centered around a local school or college, did you ever consider the additional travel and activity that these institutions generate? A partial list would include special meetings, athletic events, prospective students, night classes, sales persons, concerts, plays, etc. Service people or others who are in contact with the traveling public should know the location of local schools and colleges, and should also be aware of special events that are taking place at these institutions. Hospitals, medical and dental offices, and law enforcement and other local government services should also be included in your community inventory.

11. Highway, road, and trail systems—If one were to categorize the types of questions asked by tourists, the most frequent inquiries would probably be those about local roads, highways, and streets. These questions will run the gamut from: "How do I get back on the freeway?" "Where is Tenth Street?" to "Is there any construction underway on Highway #1?" Service station attendants, in particular, should be well versed on local road systems because most travelers will pick service stations to ask about road information.

12. Maps—Last, but not least, we will include maps as a community resource. We have seen some excellent examples of city, area, and county maps. Many of these maps not only contain excellent road or street information, they also list lake and stream names, water access sites, campgrounds, roadside rest stops, resorts, parks, recreational trails, etc. A well-designed city or county map can provide much of the information that we have described above. Some counties have adapted the official county map so that it serves as a major information/promotion tool. If your community has these kinds of maps, they should be an available reference source for every business that the tourist patronizes.

What do you do with all this information?

A good first step is to put it into a mimeographed form so that it can be duplicated and used. When maps and other brochures are included it may be made up into kits for information centers, businesses, and the local schools.

Consider writing up some of the information and printing it as a piece to distribute to community visitors, or equally important, to residents. Remember, the information is of little value unless it is made available to people who need it. See section "Spreading the Word."



The chamber of commerce information center can be the focal point for building a complete community information/direction/interpretation system. Detroit Lakes

WHO CAN HELP WITH THE INVENTORY?

In going about the task of making an inventory of community resources, there probably are some knowledgeable individuals in every community who could virtually do this job themselves; however, a local committee working in conjunction with a number of organizations in a community might be the more logical way to conduct a community resource inventory.

What are some of the local organizations and agencies you might contact in your community? Some of the typical organizations that might be found in many Minnesota communities are listed here. This list is by no means complete, and your community may contain many others:

1. Chamber of commerce or civic organization
2. Civic clubs
3. Local historical society
4. Local or area resort association
5. Local public schools, area vocational technical institutes, community colleges—collection of certain information might become a class project; e.g., a biology class might identify local wild plants
6. Governmental agencies
 - a. Department of Natural Resources
 - b. State Department of Transportation
 - c. U.S. Forest Service or Park Service
 - d. Soil Conservation Service
 - e. Municipal park or recreation department
 - f. County park and highway department
 - g. County planning zoning officials
 - h. County Agricultural Extension Service
 - i. Minnesota Historical Society
 - j. Minnesota folklore center

7. Activity groups—Could include such diverse organizations as
 - a. Ski clubs
 - b. Snowmobile clubs
 - c. Garden clubs
 - d. Hiking and camping clubs

8. Youth organizations

Every community will have many of the above as possible sources of help plus others. Assembly of this information can be a rewarding community project and one at which many diverse groups can work together.

SPREADING THE WORD

If those who need it are to “know your community,” how will you teach them? In other words, how will the information that has been brought together be made available?

Consider developing a systematic, on-going educational program about the community. Some parts of the program should be aimed at specific target audiences that must have community information if they are to assist travelers. Other parts of the program can be more general—aimed at the overall population to improve their awareness and pride in their home community. Among the parts of the educational program that you may wish to get going are:

- Regular news releases about items of interest, history, services, and events. Many local newspapers and radio stations do an excellent job of regularly featuring community specials. Get together with your editor and try to make this a more systematic series.
- Encourage local schools to build in regular programs of teaching about the community. Include elementary, secondary, vocational schools, and community colleges. They can teach local history; they can take regular tours of local farms, mines, factories, and other businesses; and they can study local plants and animals.
- Consider a photo contest of community points of interest. This can involve youth as in a 4-H photography project. Pictures can be displayed at local fairs or celebrations. A different theme could be announced for each year.
- Develop a slide set highlighting points of interest that can be shown to civic organizations, garden clubs, school groups, and used in training of retail businessmen and their employees.

Every citizen has a part in hosting travelers; all need to know their community. New Ulm

- Prepare literature highlighting things to see and do, history, events, and unique community features. In most communities, knowledgeable people need only encouragement and support to compile local history.
- Develop and make available good community maps.
- Set up a regular program of educational seminars to be attended by (1) all owners and managers of retail services and (2) all clerks, waitresses, gas pump operators, and others who contact the public regularly in their work. Because of the importance of this education it is treated separately in the next section.
- Establish a complete community information/direction/interpretation system. Its focus may well be the chamber of commerce information office which many communities now have. But it should be much more than a question-answer counter; it can be the nerve center that initiates and implements the entire system for helping to provide information to visitors. This can include hospitality training (see page 8), public media information features, maps and informative literature, signs for direction and interpretation, and the development of visitor services and interpretative sites. (Slide-tape 277 “An Information/Direction/Interpretation System for Minnesota Communities” is available through the Agricultural Extension Service for educational purposes.) This slide-tape may be obtained through your county extension office.
- Provide a system of directional/interpretative signs. (This is a part of the system discussed immediately above, but it deserves special note.) This system should include proper road and street identification. It may include interpretative signs that explain what the traveler sees. Consider establishing one or more sign bays (or sign plazas) on key entrance routes where travel information about services can be brought together. This can reduce or eliminate the need for signs scattered along the roadway.





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A "KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY" SEMINAR

Specific education of retail service people (business owners and their employees) is essential to help them recognize travelers and provide information that will make their visit more pleasant. Extension staff members have assisted many communities with such educational programs. Often they are called "Community Hospitality Programs." But, without regard to their name, they have similar objectives:

- To teach pride in the local community and its services,
- To provide training in learning about services, facilities, and special features of the local communities,
- To teach good salesmanship skills,
- To teach the value of tourism to the local community, how to recognize visitors, and how to help them.

Who Attends a "Know Your Community" Seminar?

First the most important group of participants are managers of retail businesses. Why retail businesses? Because travelers buy everything when they are on the road that they would need at home, but in very different proportions. Why managers? Because if managers aren't knowledgeable about and believe in the above objectives their employees can hardly be expected to do so. Secondly, the participants should be retail sales people—they are the ones who directly contact travelers (as well as residents). Thirdly, include all interested public officials and citizens.

Contents of a "Know Your Community" seminar are given below to illustrate how it might be set up. Note that it draws upon both local people and those from outside the community. It also depends upon information discussed earlier in this folder.

Know Your Community (example of seminar program)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opening exercise - surprise quiz on "Facts about Our Community" (developed from the community information list) 2. Our Tourism Industry and Visitor Attractions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For our part of the state (by staff of State Tourism Region, Division of Tourism or University Extension specialist) 3. Our Tourism Attractions and Industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By local citizen or chamber of commerce
or
This may be a panel of local citizens and businessmen each covering such topics as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Points of historical interest • Local parks and recreational areas • Hospitality services 4. "The Art of Hospitality" (principles of good salesmanship—by local businessmen, state agency or University Extension staff) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Workshop—"Know Your Community" (review of local informational material and/or use of kits of information) 6. Other workshop suggestions for participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice in recognizing and serving travelers • Discussion on "practice of hospitality applied in my business" 7. Add emphasis with extras—such as a "courtesy contest" prior to the workshop. Announce winners and award prizes during the program |
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How often should these seminars be held? Probably at least yearly and/or prior to a major event or opening of a featured community facility. Remember that sales personnel turnover is high; your community is changing; and you should be learning more every year about how to do the job better!

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